

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2020, 8:00 am - 9:30 am
Virtual Meeting
Minute Takers: Quinten Steenhuis and Scott MacGrath

Members present: Ilana Bebhick, Leah Beckett, Catrina Damrell, Shirley Elliott, Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Martha Henry, Susy Jones, Sakiko Isomichi, Debby Knight, Lindsay Levine, Scott MacGrath, Janet Mosley, Audrey Ng, Richard Nurse, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Quinten Steenhuis, Mary Verhage, Suzanne Wong

Members absent: Holden Cookson, Laura Nichols, Kristen Watkins

Staff present: Michael Orr

Public present: Helen Snively

The November minutes were approved.

1. Review of action items from November

Nothing to report

2. City updates - Michael Orr

Drop off compost has been popular and more bins will be added to the 5 locations.

Commissioner Owen O'Riordan will join for the January 13 RAC meeting. He'll likely provide update on the curbside compost situation.

Discussion about Slack channel or other ways to stay in touch outside of meetings in November. But it looks like there are no opportunities to do that in accordance w/ open meeting laws.

If less than 50% of the committee is discussing a topic, it's not a violation of open meetings. So subcommittees are OK. But if you plan anything in the subcommittee, it needs to come forward to the full committee. Reason for the law is you don't want people deliberating in a way that the public can't observe.

To keep up engagement, we could have more regular socials that people can pop in/out of. Or more subcommittee meetings. How can we promote more free-form discussion about current topics? Circulating articles in advance of the meeting?

Mike: article he read recently comparing environmental benefits of various ways to dispose of food waste. Our current approach, anaerobic digestion, came out on top. He will circulate.

There was consensus that talking about articles, current events, during the meeting is worth a try. Will be included on January's agenda.

3. Subcommittee updates

CPAC/RAC status report

- No meetings in November/December
- Thinking about reducing meat consumption at Harvard, and how that plays into reducing food waste/carbon impact. Discussed how this could fit into Cambridge schools' food service. How can promoting traditional, ethnic, plant-based foods fit into the picture? What about audits to track animal-based products?
- Audit of packaging is planned.
- Reduce clothing waste
- Promote donation/repair/reuse - we don't have curbside pick up in Cambridge but we do have bins, including Helpsy
- Comment from Leah:
 - I think there could be an opportunity to buy direct from farmers to provide schools with more seasonal food that doesn't travel far. This might be challenging for winter months, but May – June and September – Thanksgiving could be workable
- "Cool foods pledge" -- reducing "scope 3" emissions. Susy will pass on a final report addressing this.
- Debby K.: Restaurants are beginning to show carbon/water/land, GHG emissions impact data on their food
- Helen: A comment/question on the Cool Foods effort. Does it acknowledge the potential role of sustainably raised meat... as opposed to meat raised in CAFOs? The sustainable meat folks claim that grass raised beef actually sequesters carbon. Harvard, at least, could afford to buy locally raised grass fed beef. Pointing this out, not a suggestion.

Report back from Analytics/survey subcommittee

- Survey all Cambridge residents
- Focus on food waste

Divided research tasks

Lots of research on survey methods and best practices.

Findings:

- Having a framework to categorize each survey question useful
- Survey results may not represent the whole population. Those who typically respond tend to be less diverse. How do we make it more inclusive, or at least recognize the limits of our data?
- Important to design a clear, attainable goal for the survey
- Keep personal questions to the end

Draft survey:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DB5KdUK7tFcNR_K2MDZpoZpPVaWjAhvsnEmm1cTswSs/edit?usp=sharing

4. Public comment: None

Mike will save the chat from our meetings so that they can be included in our minutes

5. Announcements:

Rob: This Sunday, fix-it clinic based in Lund, Sweden called Intergalactic virtual fix-it clinic. Also happens to be Sweden's Santa Lucia day.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/zoom-hosted-from-malm%C3%B6lund-sweden/intergalactic-virtual-fixit-clinic-565-lundmalm%C3%B6-sweden/1003452443471510>.

Harvard will also host a virtual fix-it clinic. A link will be forthcoming.

6. Action Items:

- Mike:
 - Prepare priorities for 2021 for January meeting
 - Circulate articles/reports
 - Send out new request for people to sign up to be minute takers
- 3rd subcommittee (Repair & Reuse) to prepare to provide update in January meeting
- Susy to share MIT study
- Scott, Diane, + Suzanne to discuss Google Groups or other tools for article sharing
- Rob will share details on fix it clinic / Swedish event

Zoom Chat:

08:13:41 From Quinten Steenhuis :

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GIXWuZDytHgc9Nye-RY5VVjl7laj6MMFStcdkH3cL8o/edit?usp=sharing>

08:25:25 From Meera Singh : Mike yes please share both the articles

08:33:35 From Quinten Steenhuis : We picked up a backyard composter on buy nothing cambridge

08:34:25 From Rob Gogan : Nice—let us know how it works out for your household!

08:35:31 From Quinten Steenhuis : have to admit rat proofing was a surprising challenge. but I basically wrapped the whole thing in hardware cloth and it's now working great

08:36:21 From Sakiko Isomichi : that's great to hear, Quentin. Good to know about the rat issue

08:37:36 From Helen Snively : Quinton and anyone else: I am a composting fanatic and happy to trouble shoot about rats or whatever else. Also ... sigh.. I have a lot of experience with critters... hmsnively@aol.com

08:41:20 From Leah Beckett : Rob, I think there could be an opportunity to buy direct from farmers to provide schools with more seasonal food that doesn't travel far. This might be challenging for winter months, but May – June and August – Thanksgiving could be workable

08:43:25 From Sakiko Isomichi : Mike, would you make me a cohost?

08:44:38 From Rob Gogan : Leah, great idea. I know there was interest on the RAC/CPAC group about this.

08:46:10 From Helen Snively : A comment/question on the Cool Foods effort. Does it acknowledge the potential role of sustainably raised meat... as opposed to meat raised in CAFOs? I ask because the sustainable meat folks claim that grass raised beef actually sequesters carbon. Harvard, at least, could afford to buy locally raised grass fed beef. But I'm not urging anything.. just pointing this out :)